



Sent?
see Australia
1957

R I T Z H O T E L B O M B A Y

TELEPHONES: 37161-64 (70 EXTENSIONS)
TELEGRAMS: RITZ - BOMBAY

Monday

November 11, 1957

Dear Jim:

We will of course be seeing you not so very long after you receive this, but by then our impressions of the past few days are likely to have been blurred by later stimuli, just as a part of what we had assimilated of Australia may have been for the time being, by India.

We left Perth according to schedule (or rather a couple of hours late) on Wednesday night, flying in a Qantas Constellation via Jakarta, Singapore and Bangkok to Calcutta. The stopovers were essentially useless, except to interrupt any possibility of sleep— even though, in fact we were laid over about 3 hrs. in Bangkok, and some foresight might have enabled us a view of the city. But just airports it was, and the only point of possible interest there was seeing red paint and tar on a statue of one of the recent kings. The Indonesians were also very touchy, as reflected in the passport formalities, and the fact that our plane had to detour about 200 miles to approach Jakarta from the north, flights over Java itself being restricted. It was, of course, steamy and hot at each port, and too hazy to see a great deal from the air. Singapore, is however, a striking city as you know. It is also a duty-free terminal, and it's just as well we weren't in a shopping mood, though I did pick up an all-voltage shaver I've had my eye on for a long time. (for about 50¢ less than it would be in London; I was in no mood to haggle, and I wanted it to use in India, where my present apparatus won't do).

We came in to Calcutta about 4 hours late, to be greeted by the Haldanes, who to our utter surprise welcomed us in ~~XXXX~~ Hawaiian fashion, with leis! We were whisked through immigration as semi-VIP's, but there was no helping the impoundment of our GE transistor radio, which must be a basic item in the black market. The Customs promised to transfer this, by air, to Bombay, and we are supposed to reclaim it upon departure! The airport there is a ~~filthy~~ filthy crowded place, and we were very grateful to have the Haldanes and their retinue of fixers from the Indian Statistical Institute to cope with the porters, etc. Even we have been intimidated from doing things for ourselves, like carrying luggage, etc. The night of our arrival was the occasion of a lunar eclipse, and all Calcutta was out on the streets, or so it seemed during our ride from the airport to the ISI. (But this was an illusion, the roadway is always clogged with people and cows.) The air was full of dust and haze— much of this from the 'native fuel' or dried dung; one sees the patties of these being left to dry on every available vertical surface. The burning dung leaves a faint acrid smell everywhere, not really unpleasant, a mild approximation to the Calif. smog, which has a comparable technological basis.

It would be hard to describe the poverty and confusion that blankets Calcutta. The city has been swollen to twice its normal size by the influx of refugees from E. Bengal (now Pakistan) and there simply isn't enough work or housing (or, I suppose food) for most of them. There are people everywhere, in all sorts of dress (and some of the children of course in none at all). The city is a vast slum, and even the Chowringhee and other 'downtown' streets are not much better. I suppose you're used by now to seeing human beasts of burden — and I don't mean just rickshaws, but teams of human oxen pulling heavy loads, but even this work is better than none at all, and better

Members:



Proprietors: RITZ PRIVATE LTD. Bombay

Associate Hotels

RITZ HOTEL Hyderabad, AIR LINES HOTEL Bombay

HILLGROVE HOTEL Calcutta

Members:



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF

27000



R I T Z H O T E L B O M B A Y

TELEPHONES: 37161-64 (70 EXTENSIONS)

TELEGRAMS: RITZ — BOMBAY

to feed a man than a cow. The cattle on the whole appear to be rather better off than the unemployed.

We had a chance next day to visit a more rural village (there was a community of about 500 in each, to make a complex of about ~~32~~ 20,000 in each.) We'll just have to show you our pictures of this; the life there was of course quite primitive, but probably less hideous than in the cities. The children at least looked fairly healthy, but they are growing ~~at~~ a large proportion of cash crops (jute) and a rice famine elsewhere would make life very hard in the village.

Members:



Proprietors: RITZ PRIVATE LTD. Bombay

Associate Hotels

RITZ HOTEL Hyderabad, AIR LINES HOTEL Bombay

HILLGROVE HOTEL Coonoor

Members:



AMERICAN SOCIETY OF